

Preproposal Conference June 5, 2002

- 1) Are we planning a transition period?

ANSWER: Yes, we plan a one-month transition period as specified in the Statement of Work (SOW) under Service Area 4.7, "Service Area- Transition Plan and Contract Close Out, page 34.

- 2) Is it possible to see the facilities of the Contractor who currently provides the Clearinghouse services?

ANSWER: You would have to contact the current Contractor to accomplish this.

- 3) Who is the current Contractor?

ANSWER: Eagle Design and Management, Inc. (see page 1 of the RFP).

- 4) Is the current Contractor eligible to participate under this NAICS code?

ANSWER: We are not at liberty to discuss the eligibility of the current Contractor.

- 5) Can NIAMS provide the number of inquiries received broken down by facsimile, TTY, email, regular mail, and by language?

ANSWER: The statistical breakdown data on inquiries is included in the Annual and Sample Monthly Reports which can be found under Section 3, "Applicable Documents" in the SOW or in the Resources Section of the Web version of the RFP. ("Sample reports" are listed as Resource #9.)

- 6) Could the NIAMS provide an explanation of how the level of effort was estimated? What is the yearly breakdown?

ANSWER: The level of effort was developed taking into consideration the experience under the current contract, and an estimate of growth in the inquiries and other task areas. A yearly breakdown of the level of effort we estimate for this requirement is provided below, and is based on a 2,080-hour staff year. This estimate is provided for information only and is not to be considered restrictive for proposal purposes.

Labor Category	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5	Total Direct Labor Hours
Project Director	2,080	2,080	2,080	2,080	2,080	10,400
Project Manager	312	208	208	208	208	1,144
Information Specialist	7,139	7,853	8,638	9,502	10,452	43,584
Web Graphic Designer	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	2,430	12,150
Graphics Designer	238	240	240	240	240	1,198
Editor	443	443	443	443	443	2,215
System Administrator	1,019	1,019	1,019	1,019	1,019	5,095
Database Prog./Specialist	664	664	664	664	664	3,320
Sr. Database Prog. Spec.	412	412	412	412	412	2,060
Librarian/ Abstractor	1,851	1,851	1,851	1,851	1,851	9,255
Patient Liaison Escorts	1,040	1,248	1,497	1,797	2,157	7,739
Warehouse Personnel	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249	2,249	11,245
Support Staff	1,470	1,470	1,470	1,470	1,470	7,350
Total	21,347	22,167	23,202	24,364	25,675	116,755

- 7) What is the current head count that matches up with Article F.3 – Level of Effort (see RFP page 15)?

ANSWER: The following information is provided concerning the level of effort funded under the current contract. It should be noted that this is the labor mix that was negotiated at the time of contract award. The actual amounts expended are not identical to the amounts negotiated.

<u>Labor Category</u>	<u>Labor Hours</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	<u>Year 5</u>	
Project Director	1,821	1,821	1,821	1,821	1,821	9,105
Other Professional	12,241	13,862	13,862	13,862	13,862	67,689
Support	<u>1,636</u>	<u>3,377</u>	<u>3,377</u>	<u>3,377</u>	<u>3,377</u>	<u>15,144</u>
Total	15,698	19,060	19,060	19,060	19,060	91,938

The current “head count” information cannot be provided. There is no correlation from the current contract to the effort that is the topic of this RFP as there are additional tasks required in the SOW.

- 8) Approximately how many documents are ordered via the web (per month or per year)? What growth rate do you anticipate?

ANSWER: Please review the information provided in the Resource List for RFP No. NIH-NIAMS-03-01. (<http://www.niams.nih.gov/rtac/funding/grants/rfp/resource-list-rfp0301.htm>) We anticipate growth in this area but are unable to predict with any accuracy what that growth might be.

- 9) Does an Alternate proposal need to be submitted if the offeror proposes use of a different system than what is required in the RFP?

ANSWER: Refer to Section L.1(a)5 regarding the submission of Alternate proposals.

- 10) Can offerors propose use of a software system if it is thought that it will enhance performance under the contract?

ANSWER: Offerors must take into consideration the cost of such a system. Although technical ability is a paramount consideration in this acquisition, the Government also considers cost as a source selection factor. Also, the Government would give thorough consideration to whether the software system would inhibit future competition of this requirement.

- 11) Why has this contract been set aside for small business concerns?

ANSWER: The NIAMS has been successful in competing this requirement in the small business arena over the last 15 years.

- 12) Can you tell us more about the kinds of information that is considered when the Government evaluates the Contractor's award fee?

ANSWER: All the elements that are considered are outlined in the SOW.

- 13) Can the Contractor provide a self-assessment when the award fee is being evaluated?

ANSWER: This can be discussed during negotiations and may be incorporated into the contract award, if the Government believes it is beneficial to do so.

- 14) Will we provide debriefings to offerors who do not make the competitive range?

ANSWER: Offerors are immediately notified in writing of their standing after the determination of the competitive range. Included in the notification letter is an option to request a pre or post-award debriefing. Offerors must submit written requests for a debriefing within three days of receipt of the notification letter. It is the policy of NIAMS to provide all debriefing requests in writing.

- 15) Can you provide examples of the reports that are required under the contract?

ANSWER: Examples of the contract-required reports are included in Section 3, "Applicable Documents," in the SOW or in the Resources Section of the Web version of the RFP. ("Sample reports" are listed as Resource #9.) Web links to these resources can be found at: <http://www.niams.nih.gov/rtac/funding/grants/rfp/resource-list-rfp0301.htm>

- 16) How will the NIAMS handle the level of effort and contract costs if the inquiries increase more than anticipated?

ANSWER: We monitor the level of effort and costs on a monthly basis. If we see an increase in this task area, we consider decreasing other task areas in order to stay within the total level of effort allotted for the work. If this cannot be accomplished, we will give consideration to funding additional effort or recompeting the effort earlier.

- 17) Is there a requirement included in the RFP that project staff be committed to the project for the 5-year period?

ANSWER: The only requirement in the RFP regarding staffing is that the Project Director be dedicated to the contract for 100% effort. We do not require commitment to the contract for a 5 -year period.

- 18) How extensive should offerors be in submitting writing samples? Is 100 pages too many?

ANSWER: Writing samples should be adequate to allow proper evaluation of the proposed individuals skill for the position for which they are proposed. There is no page limitation on the proposal. However, we discourage offerors from submitting samples that are impractically long and cannot be quickly and easily read by reviewers.

- 19) Will there be an on-site office for the patient liaison at NIH?

ANSWER: No

- 20) How far in advance will the Contractor be advised of patient scheduling?

ANSWER: Notification may be as little as one day.

- 21) Where will the Contractor be required to pick up patients?

ANSWER: The Contractor will greet patients and escort them to their appointments at the NIH's Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center. On rare occasions, there may be a need to greet and escort patients at the NIH Community Health Center in the Cardozo neighborhood of Washington, D.C., (or at future neighborhood sites if and when available) and to escort them to an appointment at the Clinical Center, or vice versa.

- 22) Does the patient liaison have to be bilingual?

ANSWER: The SOW requires that the patient liaison be fluent in speaking and writing Spanish.

- 23) What happens if someone is not Spanish-speaking but Balkan?

ANSWER: There is no requirement in the SOW for translation of languages other than Spanish and English. Should the need arise for translation in other languages, the Government will arrange for translation services outside of this contract.

24) CHID, BRS Net Answers related queries:

- a. Who has developed this database/ utility?
- b. What are the specifications, size, tables etc.. especially what are the limits of this database?
- c. Who maintains them? What is the hardware/software used?
- d. Any Denial of Service (DOS) attacks or threats in the past? Any shutdowns/crashes in the past?
- e. Are we responsible for any performance issues in the service delivery to customers of the Information Clearinghouse in case of failure/crash/shutdown of the CHID or BRS Net Answers?

ANSWER: The answers to these questions are not currently available, but will be provided via RFP amendment as soon as possible.

25) Who maintains the TTY device? Who bears the cost of maintenance?

ANSWER: The TTY device will be provided as Government Furnished Property under the contract. The Government bears the cost of maintenance.

26) How many Information Specialists does the Government require under the current contract?

ANSWER: The current level of effort breakdown in the contract does not list the number of information specialists required for the contract work. The breakdown of effort is provided in the answer to question number 7.

We believe the best source of understanding the volume of work for this contract are the annual and the monthly report that are included in Section 3, "Applicable Documents," in the SOW or in the Resources Section of the Web-version of the RFP. ("Sample reports" are listed as Resource #9.)

27) What is the total cost of the current contract?

ANSWER: The total cost plus fixed fee of the current contract is: \$4,803,755.

28) Can you please provide the contract number of the current contract?

ANSWER: N01-AR-8-2234

- 29) Approximately how many documents are ordered via the web (per month or per year)? What growth rate do you anticipate?

ANSWER: All statistics that the NIAMS Clearinghouse currently tracks are included in the Annual and Sample Monthly Reports which can be found under Section 3, “Applicable Documents” in the SOW or in the Resources Section of the Web version of the RFP. “Sample reports” are listed as Resource #9.) We do not currently require reporting of statistics other than those presented in the sample reports. Please review the document provided in the Resource List for the RFP.

- 30) Approximately how many individuals are currently contacts in the existing Clearinghouse database(s)?

The NIAMS Clearinghouse currently manages several databases comprised of a total of approximately 84,000 contacts.

- 31) How many OCPL staff will require access to the Clearinghouse system that tracks inquiries (this may be for the purpose of tracking and reporting Clearinghouse performance, providing assistance with requests from legislative offices, and providing assistance and approval of custom responses)?

ANSWER: A total of approximately 8-15 OCPL staff members will need to have the ability to *input* the inquiries they receive directly into the tracking system. The NIAMS needs regarding the tracking system are explained in the SOW, Section 4.3.2., “Materials Management, E. Data-Collection, Tracking, and Reporting System.”

- 32) Approximately how many documents are there within the 30 information packets maintained by the Clearinghouse?

ANSWER: Each of the 30 information packets contains approximately 3 articles, so there is a total of approximately 90 documents (or articles) in the information packets.

- 33) Does the Web site need to be in both English and Spanish?

ANSWER: There is no requirement for a separate Web site to be developed in the SOW. As indicated in the SOW some of our publications are currently available in both English and Spanish, and they are available both in print and on the NIAMS Web site. In the NOTES TO OFFERORS included in the SOW, the number of publications that will be required to be translated into Spanish are identified.

- 34) Would the NIAMS like Web site visitors to be able to download documents?

ANSWER: There is no requirement for a separate Web site to be developed in the SOW.

The majority of NIAMS current publications are available on the NIAMS Web site and can be downloaded by visitors to the Web site. We expect that most new publications we create in the future will be posted on the NIAMS Web site and will be made accessible for downloading, as well.

- 35) Would the NIAMS like Web site visitors to be able to order documents that could be sent back to the requestor instantaneously via fax and e-mail response?

ANSWER: The SOW outlines the requirements for methods (e-mail, fax, voice mail) and timelines in responding to requests for publications and information. Instantaneous responses are not required, but offerors should feel free to propose whatever innovations and efficiencies will suit the requirements of the SOW.

- 36) Would the NIAMS like any of the documents available for order on the Web site to be provided for a fee that is paid via a credit card transaction without human intervention by the Clearinghouse? If so, would this only apply to those requesting higher volumes of documents?

ANSWER: As discussed in the SOW, Section 4.6 "Service Area - Cost Recovery," the NIAMS does not currently have a cost recovery plan in effect. If the NIAMS determines cost recovery is necessary, the SOW outlines what actions will be required.

- 37) Will users of the Clearinghouse system that tracks inquiries need to be able to periodically operate remotely without an internet connection? (e.g., at public exhibits) How often might this occur and how often would they need to synchronize with the main Clearinghouse server?

ANSWER: No.

- 38) Would the NIAMS like the system that tracks inquiries to be able automatically alert the Contractor Staff (Project Director/Project Manager/Contractor Management) or the Project Officer via e-mail if certain requests have not been fulfilled within pre-designated time intervals?

ANSWER: See the SOW, Section 4.3.2, "Service Area - Materials Management, E. Data-Collection, Tracking, and Reporting System." If the contractor finds that this type of alert system is helpful in monitoring their performance, they are free to use it. It is not, however, a requirement of the SOW.



- 39) Approximately how many audio and video-based content items are there to be maintained on the Web site? On average, approximately how long are they (run time) or how large are they (megabytes, gigabytes)?

ANSWER: None.

- 40) Would the NIAMS like the system that tracks inquiries to be connected to the phone system so as to allow a computer screen to pop up with a specific caller's contact information and a historical record of activities relating to that caller?

ANSWER: This is not a requirement of the SOW.

- 41) Do Clearinghouse or NIAMS staff currently use Microsoft Outlook? Is it important for the system that tracks various activities to synchronize activity, calendar, and contact information with Microsoft Outlook?

ANSWER: There is no requirement for a system to synchronize NIAMS OCPL staff activities, calendar, or contact information through any system.

- 42) Is the NIAMS looking to have the system that maintains the Clearinghouse activity requests integrated to the CDS (Coalition Directory Systems) so that any information appearing in both databases are kept up to date in both systems when contact record information changes?

ANSWER: There is no requirement that the two systems discussed above be interoperable. In fact, the CDS is an established database that operates in Microsoft Access, as discussed in the SOW.

The two systems serve two separate functions and it is difficult to envision the usefulness of combining the two.

- 43) Is the NIAMS looking to have a single system that would provide the same functionality as the current CDS (Coalition Directory System) (e.g., browse and update contact information; search for contacts by name, organization, contact type, and e-mail address; add browse, and update organizations; create CDS Directory Listing sorted by organization; create roster reports; send e-mail blasts; create mailing labels; and run mail merges) while at the same time meeting the activity tracking and fulfillment needs of the Clearinghouse? Is it within the realm of possibility an information system that would serve these dual purposes could replace the current CDS thereby resulting in a single unified system and database of organization and

contact information? If so, how many users of the current CDS are there and how many of those utilize the system for e-mail blasts?

ANSWER: No. See the response to Question 42, above.

- 44) Are the CDS and the Clearinghouse activity tracking and fulfillment system to be completely separate from one another?

ANSWER: See response to Question 44, above.

- 45) Do Clearinghouse bulk mailings need to be CASS certified and meet the USPS qualifications for postal discounts on bulk mailings?

ANSWER: All Clearinghouse mail is received and sent from the NIH Stone Street Mail Facility, as described in the SOW, Section 4.2.3, "Messenger Services." The Stone Street Facility does not require mailings to be CASS certified or to meet the USPS qualifications for postal discounts on bulk mailings.

- 46) Does the Clearinghouse system need to correct address upon entry so that they are consistent with United States Postal Service data?

ANSWER: No.

- 47) Does the Clearinghouse system need to assign ZIP+4 and barcode for large mailings?

ANSWER: Zip+4 is required, but not the barcode.

- 48) Is it important for the Clearinghouse software solution to be designed and built using technologies that can be integrated with other NIAMS or NIH systems?

ANSWER: There is no requirement in the SOW for a software solution.

- 49) Is it important for the Clearinghouse activity tracking software architecture to be built in such a way that any customizations that are made to the Clearinghouse system continue to operate after upgrades to the underlying software used to build that system are installed?

ANSWER: The activity tracking software will be used by the contractor in tracking a reporting clearinghouse activity. It is anticipated that this will be a standalone system maintained by the contractor. There are no requirements in the SOW that require interoperability with other NIAMS systems.

- 50) Will you be providing the names of the organizations represented at the preproposal conference?

ANSWER: Listed below are the organizations with representatives in attendance:

Indigo Technologies  
Masimax Resources, Inc.  
Maya Tech. Co.  
Veri Solv Technologies  
Analytical Sciences, Inc.  
Z- Tech Co.

Eagle Design and Management, Inc.  
Team, Inc.  
Scientific Systems and Software International  
Circle Solutions  
Tascon